

IN THE SPECIFICATION

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a1 Page 1, line 1, please insert --This application is a continuation of application Serial Number 09/519,023, filed on March 3, 2000, which is a continuation of application Serial Number 09/281,859, now U.S. Patent No. 6,101,484.--

IN THE CLAIMS

Kindly cancel claims 1-34 of the 09/281,859 application and add the following new claims:

35. A system for modifying a price curve in order to approach a seller's sales goal for a featured item in an on-line buying-group sale, comprising:

(a) an e-commerce server data processing system, the e-commerce server data processing system including e-commerce server software executable on the e-commerce server data processing system and configured to define the on-line buying-group sale for the featured item;

(b) a storage device coupled to the e-commerce server data processing system and having stored therein a data repository including at least price data for the featured item, quantity data for the featured item and buyer-submitted offer data; and

(c) a merchandising staff data processing system coupled to the storage device, the merchandising staff data processing system including software executable on the merchandising staff data processing system and configured to receive merchandising staff inputs for defining the on-line buying-group sale for the featured item, the software including a market equilibrium manager configured to modify a price curve for the featured item in the on-line buying-group sale by using the price data for the featured item, the quantity data for the featured item, and the buyer-submitted offer data in the data repository in order to approach the seller's sales goal.

36. The system of claim 35 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is customer acquisition, the market equilibrium manager further configured to modify the price curve for the featured item so as to increase a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers, thus reducing a gross margin for the on-line buying-group sale and increasing market share.

37. The system of claim 35 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is increasing sales revenue for the on-line buying-group sale, the market equilibrium manager further configured to modify the price curve for the featured item so as to increase a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers, thus reducing a gross margin for the on-line buying-group sale and increasing sales revenue for the on-line buying-group sale.

38. The system of claim 35 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is inventory leveling of the featured item, the market equilibrium manager further configured to modify the price curve for the featured item so as to increase a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers, thus increasing sales of the featured item and thereby reducing inventory of the featured item.

39. The system of claim 35 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is maximizing gross profit margins for sales of the featured item, the market equilibrium manager further configured to accept modifications of the price curve for the featured item that adjust a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers to a level that maximizes the seller's gross profit margin from sales of the featured item.

40. The system of claim 35 wherein once the seller's sales goal has been approached, the seller has at least another sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale, the market equilibrium manager further configured to modify a price curve for the featured item in the on-line buying-group sale by using the price data for the featured item, the quantity data for the featured item, and the buyer-submitted offer data in the data repository in order to approach the seller's at least another sales goal.

41. The system of claim 35 in which the software is further configured to include data entry tools that establish a start time and an end time for the on-line buying-group sale, at least minimum quantities of the featured item and a starting price for the featured item.

42. The system of claim 41 in which the software is further configured by including a display component configured to manipulate and display data associated with the on-line buying-group sale on the merchandising staff data processing system.

43. The system of claim 42 in which the e-commerce server software is further configured to store price and quantity data of buyer-submitted offer inputs as the offer data in the data repository and the market equilibrium manager is further configured to obtain updated price data and the offer data from the data repository, the display component being configured to display the price curve, an offer histogram, and other information suggesting a price point at which the seller's sales goal is achieved.

44. The system of claim 43 in which the display component is further configured to allow merchandising staff inputs to modify the price curve by direct manipulation of the price curve display.

45. The system of claim 44 in which the software is configured to translate the modified price curve to data with a data format for storage in the data repository.

46. The system of claim 45 in which the display component is further configured to display a yield amount from sale of the featured item based on data from the data repository.

47. The system of claim 46 in which the display component is further configured to modify the displayed yield amount from sale of the featured item as the price curve is modified.

48. A system for testing price sensitivity for a featured item in an on-line buying-group sale, comprising:

(a) an e-commerce server data processing system, the e-commerce server data processing system including e-commerce server software executable on the e-commerce server data processing system and configured to define the on-line buying-group sale for the featured item;

(b) a storage device coupled to the e-commerce server data processing system and having stored therein a data repository including at least price data for the featured item, quantity data for the featured item and buyer-submitted offer data; and

(c) a merchandising staff data processing system coupled to the storage device, the merchandising staff data processing system including software executable on the merchandising staff data processing system, the software including a market equilibrium manager configured to provide a price sensitivity output that includes buyer offers for the featured item across the price data for the featured item in the data repository.

49. The system of claim 48 wherein the price sensitivity output has a graphical format.

50. A method for modifying a price curve and approaching a seller's sales goal for an on-line buying-group sale for a featured item, comprising:

(a) defining an on-line buying-group sale for a featured item;

(b) storing in a storage device a data repository including at least price and quantity data for the featured item;

(c) accepting inputs from prospective buyers in the form of offers for the featured item;

(d) using the inputs from the prospective buyers to modify the data repository; and

(e) receiving merchandising staff inputs utilizing a market equilibrium manager configured to modify a price curve for the featured item in the on-line buying-group sale by utilizing the price and quantity data for the featured item in the data repository and the inputs from the prospective buyers in order to approach the seller's sales goal.

51. The method of claim 50 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is customer acquisition, the method further comprising:

modifying the price curve for the featured item using the market equilibrium manager so as to increase a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers from a first range to a second range, wherein the second range is greater than the first range, thus reducing a gross margin for the on-line buying-group sale and increasing market share.

52. The method of claim 50 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is increasing sales revenue for the on-line buying-group sale, the method further comprising:

modifying the price curve for the featured item using the market equilibrium manager so as to increase a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers from a first range to a second range, wherein the second range is greater than the first range, thus reducing a gross margin for the on-line buying-group sale and increasing sales revenue for the on-line buying-group sale.

53. The method of claim 50 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is inventory leveling of the featured item, the method further comprising:

modifying the price curve for the featured item using the market equilibrium manager so as to increase a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers, thus increasing sales of the featured item and thereby reducing inventory of the featured item.

54. The method of claim 50 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is maximizing gross profit margins for sales of the featured item, the method further comprising:

modifying the price curve for the featured item using the market equilibrium manager so as to adjust a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers for the featured item to a level that maximizes the seller's gross profit margin from sales of the featured item.

55. The method of claim 50 wherein once the seller's sales goal has been approached, the seller has at least another sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale, the method further comprising:

receiving merchandising staff inputs utilizing a market equilibrium manager configured to modify a price curve for the featured item in the on-line buying-group sale by utilizing the price and quantity data for the featured item in the data repository and the inputs from the prospective buyers in order to approach the seller's at least another sales goal.

56. The method of claim 50 in which the on-line buying-group sale is defined by using data entry tools to establish a start time and an end time for the on-line buying-group sale, at least minimum quantities of the featured item and a starting price for the featured item.

57. The method of claim 56 further comprising:

(f) managing, adjusting and displaying data associated with the on-line buying-group sale.

58. The method of claim 57 further comprising:

(g) obtaining updated price data and offer data from the data repository and displaying the price curve and an offer histogram.

59. The method of claim 58 further comprising:

(h) receiving merchandising staff inputs to modify the price curve display by direct manipulation of the price curve display.

60. The method of claim 59 further comprising:

(i) translating the modified price curve to data with a data format for storage in the data repository.

61. The method of claim 60 further comprising:

(j) displaying a yield amount from sale of the featured item based on data from the data repository.

62. The method of claim 61 further comprising:

(k) modifying the displayed yield amount from sale of the featured item as the price curve is modified.

63. A method for testing price sensitivity for a featured item in an on-line buying-group sale, comprising:

(a) defining an on-line buying-group sale for a featured item;
(b) storing in a storage device a data repository including at least price and quantity data for the featured item;

(c) accepting inputs from prospective buyers in the form of buyer offers for the featured item; and

(d) producing a price sensitivity output that provides buyer offers for the featured item across the price data for the featured item in the data repository.

64. The method of claim 63 wherein the price sensitivity output has a graphical format.

65. An article of manufacture, which comprises a computer readable medium having stored therein a computer program for modifying a price curve and approaching a seller's sales goal in an on-line buying-group sale for a featured item, the computer program comprising:

(a) a first code segment which, when executed on a computer, defines an on-line buying-group sale for a featured item;

(b) a second code segment which, when executed on a computer, stores in a storage device a data repository including at least price and quantity data for the featured item;

(c) a third code segment which, when executed on a computer, accepts inputs from prospective buyers in the form of offers for the featured item;

(d) a fourth code segment which, when executed on a computer, uses the inputs from the prospective buyers to modify the data repository; and

(e) a fifth code segment which, when executed on a computer, receives merchandising staff inputs utilizing a market equilibrium manager to modify a price curve and approach the seller's sales goal for the featured item in the on-line buying-group sale by utilizing the price and quantity data for the featured item in the data repository and the inputs from the prospective buyers.

66. The article of manufacture of claim 65 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is customer acquisition, the fifth code segment further defined to:

modify the price curve for the featured item using the market equilibrium manager so as to increase a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers from a first range to a second range, wherein the second range is greater than the first range, thus reducing a gross margin for the on-line buying-group sale and increasing market share.

67. The article of manufacture of claim 65 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is increasing sales revenue, the fifth code segment further defined to:

modify the price curve for the featured item using the market equilibrium manager so as to increase a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers from a first range to a second range, wherein the second range is greater than the first range, thus reducing a gross margin for the on-line buying-group sale and increasing sales revenue for the on-line buying-group sale.

68. The article of manufacture of claim 65 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is inventory leveling of the featured item, the fifth code segment further defined to:

modify the price curve for the featured item using the market equilibrium manager so as to increase a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers, thus increasing sales of the featured item and thereby reducing inventory of the featured item.

69. The article of manufacture of claim 65 wherein the seller's sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale is maximizing gross profit margins for sales of the featured item, the fifth code segment further defined to:

modify the price curve for the featured item using the market equilibrium manager so as to attain a range of acceptable buyer-submitted offers for the featured item at a level that maximizes the seller's gross profit margin from sales of the featured item.

70. The article of manufacture of claim 65 wherein once the seller's sales goal has been approached, the seller has at least another sales goal for the on-line buying-group sale, the fifth code segment further defined to:

receive merchandising staff inputs utilizing the market equilibrium manager configured to modify the price curve for the featured item in the on-line buying-group sale by utilizing the price and quantity data for the featured item in the data repository and the inputs from the prospective buyers in order to approach the seller's at least another sales goal.

71. The article of manufacture of claim 65 in which the first code segment includes code for receiving merchandising staff inputs for defining the on-line buying-group sale for the featured item.

72. The article of manufacture of claim 71 in which the first code segment is configured to define the on-line buying-group sale for the featured item by establishing a start time and an end time for the on-line group-buying sale, at least minimum quantities of the featured item offered and a starting price for the featured item.

73. The article of manufacture of claim 72 in which the computer program additionally comprises:

(f) a sixth code segment for manipulating and displaying data associated with the on-line buying-group sale.

74. The article of manufacture of claim 73 in which the computer program additionally comprises:

(g) a seventh code segment for obtaining updated price data and the offers from the data repository and displaying the price curve and an offer histogram.

75. The article of manufacture of claim 74 in which the computer program further comprises:

(h) an eighth code segment for receiving merchandising staff inputs to modify the price curve display by direct manipulation of the price curve display.

76. The article of manufacture of claim 75 in which the computer program further comprises:

(i) a ninth code segment for translating the modified price curve to data with a data format for storage in the data repository.

77. The article of manufacture of claim 76 in which the computer program additionally comprises:

(j) a tenth code segment for displaying a yield amount from sale of the featured item based on data from the data repository.

78. The article of manufacture of claim 77 in which the computer program additionally comprises:

(k) an eleventh code segment for modifying the displayed yield amount from sale of the featured item as the price curve is modified.

79. An article of manufacture, which comprises a computer readable medium having stored therein a computer program for testing price sensitivity for a featured item in an on-line buying-group sale, the computer program comprising:

(a) a first code segment which, when executed on a computer, defines an on-line buying-group sale for a featured item;